

EPS DISSERTATION GUIDELINES

The final dissertation is an independent piece of work produced by each student under the supervision of a thesis supervisor, who is usually a member of the EPS Faculty Board. Each student must contact a potential supervisor with a topic proposal; before endorsing it, the supervisor will consider whether the topic is feasible and falls within the (reasonable) domain of his/her expertise.

Final exam:

The dissertation is evaluated during a *Viva* exam that will also conclude your MA degree. The exam committee consists of nine members of staff including the official thesis supervisor and a discussant nominated by the supervisor. In exceptional cases an external co-supervisor from another university may also take part in the *Viva* exam. At the end of the oral exam, the committee marks the dissertation on a scale from 0 (sufficient) to eleven points (exceptional). These points are then added to a pondered average of the marks obtained across all the exams, to calculate the final course grade on a scale from 0 to 110. The maximum grade is 110/110 *cum laude* (distinction).

Formal requirements:

The dissertation is worth 21 credits (for research and writing up of the thesis itself). The dissertation should be written in English. We expect the length to be within 70 and 130 pages. Only in exceptional circumstances we would expect the thesis to be shorter or longer than this – in which case you should consult your supervisor.

Important dates:

Viva:	Thesis completion	Application	Exams Completion
July	2 weeks earlier	Early May	early May
December	2 weeks earlier	mid-September	End of October
March	2 weeks earlier	Mid-January	End of January

Important:

These are indicative and vary from year to year. Please check the school page for additional and official information: http://www.facoltaspes.unimi.it/CorsiDiLaurea/12824_ITA_HTML.html

Supervisors:

Whoever your supervisors will be, remember that their job is *not* to tell you what to read or write, but only to give you general advice concerning how to find the relevant bibliography, how to collect/analyse data (if you need them), and how to avoid some common mistakes in preparing your dissertation. While it is reasonable to expect that they will read one complete draft of your dissertation (or one draft of each part of the dissertation), they are not supposed to go through several rounds of revision with you.

Objectives:

The main goal of an academic dissertation is to produce an independent piece of writing that enables your teachers to appraise your research skills. It is important to clarify that students at MA level are *not* expected to produce a piece of original research, in the sense of research publishable in a specialized academic journal.

Skills that will be appraised include the capacity to search/understand the existing academic literature and to identify a viable research question; the capacity to find relevant materials to answer that question; the capacity to distinguish reliable from unreliable sources; the capacity to understand the academic literature and to analyze empirical data; the capacity to present all the material in clear, independent, critical form. Being critical does not mean that we expect you to refute a given thesis or hypothesis, but simply that you should apply the above skills with intelligence and critical attitude (for example by not using unreliable sources, not endorsing controversial claims without

scrutiny, etc.). A dissertation is not a book, nor an academic article (although it may grow into one). A dissertation is written mainly to prove that you are capable of doing independent research under the guidance of a more experienced academic.